

War with Priestcraft :
OR, THE
Free-Thinker's ILIAD.
A
BURLESQUE POEM,
In Three CANTO's.

*I sing, ye Priests, forgive the Treason !
I sing the Advocates of Reason,
Who have thro' ev'ry Age defy'd
Your Sacred Cant, — and Holy Pride ;
And since ye treat them with Neglect,
As if they were a Mushroom Set,
The End which by these Lays I aim at
's to shew, that in each Age and Climate
Free-Thinking Doctors might be li't on
From Indies East to Western Briton,
In Greece, in Italy, in Holland,
From learn'd Lucretius down to Toland ;
Whose Reas'nings then as much did maul ye
As now Free-thinking Pamphlets gaul ye.*

Dedicated to the Celebrated AUTHOR of
Christianity as Old as the Creation.

L O N D O N :

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by the Booksellers in Town and Country. 1732.

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TO THE
AUTHOR
OF
Christianity as Old as the Creation.

S I R,



W H E N I determined to celebrate the glorious Endeavours (for 'till the present Age little could be boasted of the Achievements) of our Noble Society, it was almost impossible for me to avoid making choice of You for my Patron, who are grown hoary in the Cause of Free-thinking; You who have so long defended its Tenets, and who may with St. PAUL say, in respect of Your own
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Labours and those of your Companions, that *Yours* were more abundant, may that You have exceeded them All.

Happy was it for that System, whose Heroes I have praised in these Pages, that You became a Convert to Pop--y, which as it probably encouraged You to Free-Living, so this by necessary consequence drew You to Free-Thinking; in whose Service You have so often drawn your Quill, with the greatest Eclat at least, if not Success.

What a Blow did You and our Illustrious Chieftan lately deceased, give our mortal Enemies the Parsons, by the *Rights of the Christian Church*! How did You two, like *Fabius* and *Marcellus* amongst the *Romans*, preserve our Sect from Ruin by the continual Exercise of the Pen! What Volumes have been written! how bold, how daring hath been their Contents! insomuch that Free-Thinking hath in a few Years prevailed more, than 'till that time it had done, from Your darling *Æra* of the *Creation*.

In

D E D I C A T I O N. iii

In earlier Days, when the Law and the Administration combined against us, when even Heresy was dangerous, and but the Suspicion of our Principles had been fatal; Free-Thinking was constrained to a Retirement, and its Professors to speaking obscurely: the Civil Magistrate interposed in favour of Religion, and Writing against the Divine Authority of the Scriptures, would have been punished more severely than a Libel: In this deplorable Condition of Things, *Quid enim nisi Vota supersunt.*

But since then, Thanks to *CHANCE* the Deity of Free-Thinkers, and under that to Your indefatigable Toils, and those of your Mighty Colleagues, *C-wr-d*, *A-g-l*, *T-l-nd*, *W--lst-n*, *Ch-bb*, and a long &c. of other Daring Authors, who have boldly combated the Superstition of their Country, and roused even its Right Reverend Fathers in its Defence: We now hold them at a Bay, we answer *Pastoral Letters* by *Pastoral Letters*; we ridicule Demonstrations, we insult shorter

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iv DEDICATION.

Discourses, and in fine have carried Matters with so high an Hand, that a Reverend Dignitary of the Church was forced to publish one of the best Books which has been written on their Side of the Question, under the Humble Title of *An APOLOGY for the Christian Faith.*

Go on, Great SIR, exert Your Learning, display Your Skill in Dialogue, and above all cultivate that Interest, which it is so well known You have in the GREAT; 'till the unanimous Suffrage of Your Country confer that *Reward* on You, and on Your *Labours*, which from their *Distinguished Merit* they deserve.

The sincere Wish of,

Learned Doctor! Yours

Usque ad ignes,

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T H E
P R E F A C E.

By Another H A N D.



AVING with respect unto this Work, acted only the Part of an Editor, publishing it faithfully, without altering or interpolating any thing, either in the Dedication or the Body, and with addition of only here and there a Note; I thought it necessary to prefix something by way of Preface in Honour of Free-thinking, that I might appear edified at least in some degree, by the Perusal of this Panegyric.

What then could be more agreeable to my Design, than giving a short Detail of those Advantages, which Free-thinking hath brought to Mankind? viz. by driving away those Mists which hung upon their Minds, those dark Clouds that obscured their Understandings, and thereby cramp'd their Genius's, and fetter'd their Inclinations.

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First

First then with regard to Politics; how mean a Thing was it to see Monarchs stooping under Superstition, and quitting their Conquests, or stopping short in their Victories from Religious Qualms, or through Fear of Sacred Vengeance! How little did it become Alexander, who had vanquish'd the most potent Armies, subdued Kingdoms, and erected an Universal Empire, to receive with so much deference the Jewish High-Priest, to pay such profound Reverence to the antique Oddness of his Cloathing, and to suffer himself by dint of his Speech, and that old Woman's Argument, a Dream, to be put off from an Enterprize, which he had once undertaken! How much more Gallant was the Behaviour of that Royal Free-thinker Dionisius of Syracuse, who when he had plunder'd not only the Temples, but the Persons of the Gods, entered the Haven with his Ships crouded with Spoils, and a fair Wind, crying out to his Friends, Behold the Reward of Sacrilege, and with how propitious a Gale the Gods have favour'd our Exploit!

Matchiavel, that celebrated Oracle on this Subject, builds all upon the same Foundation, Take away Free-thinking, and this noble Superstructure falls to the Ground. Rightly had he instructed his Pupil, for whose sake
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his Labours were composed. Caesar Borgia stands recorded for Free-thinking unto all Posterity: He and his Father Pope Alexander thought Interest was to be prefer'd to all things, and therefore when any Body stood in the Way between them and their intended End, a Pair of Gloves, a Perfumed Band, or a Glass of generous Wine, proved an easy and polite Way of removing the Obstruction. 'Tis true, his Holiness by drinking a Glass of the latter, which had been made a little stronger than ordinary, for the sake of a couple of troublesome Cardinals, drop'd off. But Borgia, who escaped sleeping his last very narrowly from the same Accident, yet retained his Free-thinking, and like a Man of true Courage parted not with it even to his Death.

Numberless other Examples croud into my Head, with which I forbear troubling the Reader; for to say Truth, there is scarce any great Hero among either the Ancients or Moderns, whom we may not justly put into their Class. Did not the immortal Julius first free himself from those superstitious Notions of Virtue and Patriotism, that bewitched the other Romans, before he attempted what his Dream, and Mr. Cowley's Poem calls, Ravishing his Mother, that

is, putting Chains on his Country! Was not Philip of Macedon a Free-thinker in respect of the other Greeks, who stupidly threw away their Lives in Defence of the Freedom of some petty State or other, perhaps no bigger than our County of Yorkshire; while admitting into his Thoughts the Idea of Universal Empire, from a Principle of Free-thinking he began near Home first; and having subdued Greece, left it in the Power of his Son, another Free-thinker, (except in the Case before mentioned) to conquer the Persian Empire.

That Alexander was in his Sentiments a Free-thinker, notwithstanding what has been said of the Jewish History of their High-Priest (for even the greatest Men in Our Way, such as Machiavel and Cardan, have nodded) appears from the Treatment he gave one of our Sect, when brought before him, who was charged with having taken some Vessels at Sea, which were weaker than his own, and living on the Plunder: I confess the Accusation, O Alexander, (said he) but wherein do You and I differ? I take from others on the Water, a little to support my self, and Thou on Land takest away whole Kingdoms to satiate thy Ambition." Alexander, from the Liberty taken in this Speech, easily

P R E F A C E. xiii

easily discerned the Freedom of the Man's Thoughts, and as a Token of his Esteem for our Society, immediately commanded him to be let go.

By the Stir the Priests make, one would think Religion had received little Benefit from Free-thinking; whereas this is so far from being true, that one of those three general Systems of Belief, which at present are received throughout the World, viz. Mahometism, had its Source from thence: Its great Contriver, or as the Turks call him, Prophet, Mahomet, thought freely of every Religion, and liking none, set up a new one taken from them all. Arius, even our Enemies will allow was a Free-thinker, and why? because as an Heretic he disturbed the Peace of the Church, i. e. of the Majority of those who called themselves Christians. Now from the same Reason, we lay Claim to Athanasius, since that illustrious Saint also voted with a Minority. The Roman Catholics declare all the Reformed Free-thinkers. Of the Protestant Dissenters, Quakers and Muggletonians acknowledge themselves so. And thus after all this Outcry, as if Free-thinking were the Parent of Atheism and Irreligion, I have made it plain, that those who have passed for the most Religious

Religious People in the World, are, or at least are said to be, of our Society at the Bottom.

Indeed as to those two Professions, which constitute the Gentleman ipso facto, viz. the Law and the Sword, we cannot hitherto boast much of our Interest among them; for if in the One a Man pretends to think for himself (tho' ever so consonant to Reason), he is first Overuled, and then Reprimanded: and in the Other, a Free-thinker is used still worse, for 'tis ten to one if he attempts to dispute, but they send him for an Answer to a Court-Martial. 'Tis this Behaviour in both, which as I take it occasion'd our Society's Dislike to Judges, and always excites in them an Opposition to the Bill against Mutiny and Desertion.

Could we bring these under, as we have done the Parsons, or bring them over, as some say we have done the far greater Part of the Physicians; we should soon (which has been our continual Aim) arrive to that which our Patriarch Hobbs called, The State of Nature.



T H E



THE
FALL of Priestcraft,
OR, THE
Free-Thinker's ILIAD.

CANTO I.

*Things in due Order to rehearse,
Our Bard first sings the Pow'r of Verse;
Shews Fame,—which Men to Life prefer,
Can only be confer'd—by her :
Proves next their Title to this Fame,
And how, and whence—Free-thinkers claim
The Cause in which they fight, succeeds
With Promise to—relate their Deeds.*

SINCE all the Learned World agree,
That Fame depends on *Poesy*,
And that before Men found out Verse,
Which might the *Hero's* Deeds rehearse,
* The Great and Wise went to their Graves 5
Like Peasants vile,—or viler Slaves;

* *Vixere fortes ante Agamemnona, &c. HOR. Od. 9. Lib. 4.*

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And

And were, when dead,—as much forgotten
As if they ne'er had been begotten.

† But since th' Invention of this Art,
Which Life doth after Death impart ; 10
I mean, lest Folks should think't a Lie,
To Men's best Part,—their Memory :
Nor Wise or Brave—can now, d'ye see,
Go to the Grave,—but straitway we
His Fame wrap up in lofty Diction, 15
Truth well stretch'd out,—and eke'd with Fiction,
Besmear'd with Praise so wondrous gummy,
That it outlasts *Egyptian Mummy* ;
And fresh and fair preserves its Guest

* A Score of Centuries at least. 20

But then this Art should still be try'd
On Folks who've Liv'd—before they Dy'd ;
That is, were in their Life-times doing
Something was after,—worth the knowing ;
Or fought in Fields,—or taught on Benches, 25
Or Towns took in,—or took in Wenehes.

‡ *Achilles* hence, and § *Epicurus*,

** *Aeneas* wise, and *Dido* furious,

Do from the Force of tuneful Song
Unto this Hour their Names prolong, 30

† *Carminē sit vivax Virtut, expersque Sepulchri
Notitiam sera Posteritatis habet.* OVID. Trist. Lib. 4.

* I have been extremely modest in my Calculation ; *Tibullus*, a
great Proficient in this Art says,

*Quem referunt Musæ vivet dum robora tellus,
Dum Cælum Stellas, dum vehet Amnis Aquas.* Eleg. 4. Lib. 1.

‡ *Achilles* celebrated in the *Iliad*.

§ By *Lucretius*, *de Natura Rerum*.

** *Aeneas* and *Dido* by *Virgil*.

Tho'

or, The *Free-Thinker's* ILIAD. 3

Tho' 'tis two thousand Years ago
 Since they have fought the Shades below :
 So powerful is the Panegyric,
 In *Epic* Strain, or lofty *Lyric*,
 Nor Rage, nor Time the Fame could shake e'er 35
 Where ‡ *Homer* was the Undertaker ;
 Or tarnish any *Hero's* Glory,
 If *Pindar* —had embalm'd his Story.

What pity then that hitherto
 No *Bard* attempted e'er to do 40
 Justice—to those who Reason taught,
 And freely spoke,—and freely thought :
 Or is't the *Hero*,—or the *Lover*,
 Should only Life from Verse recover ?

We'll prove,—that each *Free-thinking* Sage 45
 Does by a Double Right engage
 The *Muse's* Care ;—for we shall shew,
 They *Heroes* are,—and *Lovers* too.

* Whoe'er has read the *Civil Law*
 (Which once *Rome's* Empire kept in Awe) 50
 May there discern,—how Advocate
 Who learnedly could Point debate,
 While he his Client's Cause defends,
 And Lungs—for sake of Justice spends,
 As much a Soldier is,—as he 55
 Who struts about,—arm'd *Cap-a-Pee* ;

‡ The Gods its strong Foundations laid in vain,
 Thy *ILIUM*, *Homer*, ever shall remain. *Ode on the Power of Verse.*

* *Impp. Leo & Anthemius, l' Advocatis. C. de Advoc. divers. indiciorum. Advocati, qui dirimunt, &c.*

4 The Fall of Priestcraft :

And by his Words—does the same Good
As t'other does—by shedding Blood :
Ay!—how?—Why both protect from Wrong,
As this by Sword,—so that by Tongue. 60
Each then should equal Honour share,
Who wars in Field,—or at the Bar.

† If so,—that He's a Soldier strait,
Who can preserve a Man's Estate ;
Then He—must sure a *Hero* be, 65
Who can our Intellects set free,
And leave the inward Man at Rest,
From galling Chain of Tyrant Priest.
This *Hero*—now to prove a Lover,
Why that too—next we shall discover. 70

The Sages both of *Greece* and *Rome*,
(Names which should strike Opposers dumb)
The Soul's Affection paint like Women,
§ The Virtues chaste,—the Vices common.
Thus *Pallas* we for Wisdom prove, 75
And *Venus* thus, is put for Love.
Fortune you'll say is well exprest,
When in a Female Habit drest ;
But in the self-same Garb we view
The *Muses* and the *Graces* too : 80
And seeing such then is the Case,
None will dispute 'gainst *Rome* and *Greece*.
Yet when Submission here once paid is,
Reason and *Truth* become Fair Ladies,

† Vid. Collins's *Discourse on Free-Thinking*, &c. Preface to the
Grounds and Reasons, &c.

§ The Dream of *Hercules*. The Table of *Cebes*.

And

or, The *Free-Thinker's* ILIAD.

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And if of them,—as all agree,
Free-thinkers so enamour'd be,
 That for their sakes,—as * *Bowman* has it,
 They'd dare the Whipping-Post or Gibbet;
 Or round the Globe distressed flit,
 Clad with a Goat-skin Coverlit.

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Are not *Free-thinkers* then, forsooth,
Knights-Errant, in the CAUSE of TRUTH?

Thus then in † *Syllogistic* Chime
 I've prov'd our *Hero's* Right to Rhime:
 Next,—were it fit,—I should go on
 To tell the Wonders they have done;
 But I strict Order must regard,
 'Tis that—and Stile make up the *Bard*,
 As certainly—as Dress and Show
 Are known to constitute—a *Beau*.

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So, e'er we come unto Narration,
Critics require a Declaration,
 Whence ‡ Quarrel sprung,—that thus excites
 The Valour of our Reas'ning Knights,
 And makes them—throughout ev'ry Age
 Against the rest of Mankind wage
 § Unequal War,—and still propose,
 Not for their own sakes,—but their Foes,

105

* Vid. *Bowman's* Preface to his Sermon.

† An Hudibrastic Phrase, i.e. *Logically*.

‡ The Advocates in Prose have proved in favour of this Society, that there has been *Free-Thinkers* in all Ages.

§ It is the Basis of their Sect, that Thinking cannot be restrained; They might consequently enjoy their own Thoughts safely, and nothing but this Desire of freeing their Enemies from Priestcraft could induce them to make their Sentiments publick.

To

6 The Fall of Priestcraft :

To prove that their Opinion's right,
And for them—'gainst themselves they fight. 110

* So, near a Century ago,
The Parliament of—Forty One
Rais'd for their King a mighty Force,
Who fought against him Foot and Horse,
Until most loyally they took 115
Their PRINCE,—and brought him to the Block.

† Or as—(which better suits our Case)
The *Grand Monarch*,—of's special Grace,
Did by's *Most Christian* Troops compel
His Subjects—to keep out of Hell, 120
And sore against their Inclination,
Did, *Vi et Armis*,—force Salvation.

Attention having thus bespoke,
Of course I should some Muse invoke,
Or call some God or Goddess hither, 125
To make a most cælestial Pother.

Custom, so well supported by
§ The most antique Authority,
Hath hitherto held such a Sway,
That ev'n ‡ *Lucretius* did obey; 130
And summon'd *Venus* to assist him,
To overturn Religious System;
Tho' herein,—or I'm much mista'en,
Thro' love to Form,—he was to blame,

* The Parliament's Commissions run in this Stile.

† *Lewis XIV's* Mission of Dragoons amongst the *Hugonots*:

§ *Homer, Virgil*, and all the Epic Poets, even *Musæus*, whom
some suppose more antient than *Homer*.

‡ *Lucretius*, tho' the End of his Poem was to extinguish the
Belief of the Gods, invokes *Venus* at the Beginning.

or, The *Free-Thinker's* ILIAD. 7

As *Doctors* wisely—play the Fool, 135
Nor Murder mind—to follow Rule.

Declining then such Help Divine,
My Verse doth thus—its Scope untwine :
Man is, ye know,—a two-fold Creature,
Compos'd of Parts—of different Nature ; 140

In which— (to separate what's combin'd)
That's call'd the *Body*,—This the *Mind* ;
And in this last,—to Age from Youth
Dwells Reason,—Handmaid unto Truth.
With whom—(as I before have written) 145

Free-thinkers are so deeply smitten :
But as this Lady is so shy,
One scarce knows how—her to come nigh,
Reason—has long been worshipped
As sort of *Vice-Queen*—in her stead ; 150

Tho' it doth with the most prevail,
That this assuming *Abigail*
But very little good can do
For those—who Lady *Truth* pursue ;
Since they,—who hate Free-thinking Scheme, 155
Adhering to some Priestly Dream,

Affert,—O strange !—that Human Reason,
In Points sublime,—is out of Season ;
And that—of Truth we nothing learn
From her,—But in some small Concern : 160

Wherein—(apart all Vanity)
The Senses know as much as She.
But that—in Things of highest Station,
Truth's only known—from *Revelation*.

'Tis

* Tis such Positions,—d'ye see, 165
 Make room for Priestcraft, Bigottry,
 With other Evils of that kind,
 Which tends towards raising o'er the Mind,
 A Sacerdotal Usurpation,
 Concomitant of Superstition. 170
 The Soul o'erspreading with a Gloom,
 From whence ten thousand Horrors come,
 That vex, afflict, and make Men feel
 More poinant Pains, than Whips of Steel.
 Each Hour of Happiness controul, 175
 Disturb the Mind,—distract the Soul;
 Perplex us with fantastic Care,
 And ride Folks,—worse than the *Night-Mare*.
 † From such a State to rescue Men,
 And give them Freedom once again; 180
 To rid 'em of this Load of Evil,
 By scaring off both Priest and Devil;
 To leave them—at their perfect Ease,
 To think and act just as they please,
 Unfrighted—by their fond Mistakes 185
 Of future Fire,—and Brimstone Lakes.
Free-thinkers strove in ev'ry Age
 From such odd Whims—to disengage
 Mens Minds,—and, quit of these Disputes,
 To leave them happy—as the Brutes. 190
 § The Progress of this vast Design,
 No less than *Heav'n* to undermine,

* See *Essay on Free-Thinking, Oracles of Reason, &c.*

† See *Lucretius, Oracles of Reason, Essay on Free-Thinking.*

§ The End of the *Epicurean System*.

Blow up the Ætherial bright Abodes,
 And ev'n Annihilate the Gods.
 From Age to Age my Verse shall trace, 195
 Through *Ægypt*, *India*, and *Greece*,
 Through *France*, through *Italy*, and *Poland*,
 Through *Britain's* Isle, and *Fenny Holland*,
 Whate'er of Note thro' them we find all
 From *Epicurus*, down to *Tindal*. 200
 Our future *Canto's* shall relate,
 In Numbers which may emulate,
 That Tale, which shall thro' Ages pass
 Of Knight 'yclept Sir *Hudibras*.
 At least if we should rise no higher 205
 Than *pari libra*—with *Matt. Prior**,
 We still shall Comfort have o' this,
 Our Verse and Subject's of a Piece;
 And we with reason may expect
 The *Poem* may outlast the *Sect*. 210

*And having thus mark'd out the way,
 This CANTO hath no more to say.*

* This is not designed as any Reflection on Mr. *Prior*; his *ALMA* is without question a very entertaining Piece, but his Poetry is not altogether so regular as *Butler's*, he has sometimes suffer'd three Lines to rhyme, and has even made use of Alternate Rhime, neither of which agree by any means with Hudibrastic Verse.





C A N T O II.

*The POET here pursues his Thread,
His Seet deducing from its Head;
Its Source he from the Indies brings,
Next of the Greek Free-thinkers sings,
And by — Poetica Licentia
Tells all their different Sententia:
Which from this Canto well observ'd,
The Modern Wits — claim all the Third.*

THE Ancients, — who the * Learn'd agree,
Were wiser Folks by half than we,
Thought fit, as Deities, to mention
Whoever had by quaint Invention
Found what might human Wants supply, 215
Or make Life glide on merrily:
Disdaining that immortal Art
Should from a Mortal Blockhead start;
But rather seem as if 'twere giv'n
By Courtesy direct from Heaven. 220

Thus Ceres to the Clouds was born,
Who taught the Art of raising Corn;

* Sir William Temple and most learned Men own, that the Learning of the Moderns falls far short of the Antients, Wotton and the rest of their Opposites aver the Moderns excel, and assert it particularly in Religious Knowledge, i. e. Free-Thinking.

And

or, The *Free-Thinker's* ILIAD. 11

And *Bacchus* claim'd his Rights Divine,
For having broach'd the Use of Wine;
Phæbus the Doctor's Art beginning, 225
And *Pallas*,—who first found out Spinning,
Olympus gain'd,—and were rever'd
As Gods,—who for our Good appear'd;
Such Blessings taught, and straitway then
Flew up to native Skies again. 230

Have such as these been so renown'd!
And shall not equal Force be found
To grace the Origin of those,
Who, unto Superstition Foes,
† Have try'd,—and try'd,—and try'd again, 235
To teach the stubborn Race of Men
* What might be sure soon understood,
That *Pleasure* is the greatest Good;
Which Men should therefore strive t'obtain,
Without a Thought—of future Pain. 240
Do Dictates such as these deserve
No Bard, who might the Praise preserve
Of those—who first those Doctrines taught,
With so much Peace to Mankind fraught?
§ Can *Button's* now afford us no Wit? 245
Is there no Infidel a Poet?

† From these generous Principles did *Lucretius* write his Poetical Body of Philosophy, and the same Cause doubtless moved our Modern Free-Thinkers, *C-ll-ns*, *Toland*, *Tindal*, *Chubb*, *Asgil*, *Woolston*, &c. to publish their several Writings.

* This is a Principle that Men when they get rid of the Prejudices of Education easily acquire; and is the Basis on which is afterwards raised the Superstructure of Free-thinking.

§ This alludes to the Accomplishment of a certain Prophecy of a famous Bard, *viz.*

And *Button's* Wits to Worms shall turn,
Who Maggots were before.

C—b— with mungrel Genius curst,
 Prefer'd for having wrote the worst,
 Could'st thou not spare—an ODE at least,
 To turn Re—g—n into Jest? 250
 Or was the Task reserv'd to be
 In dapper Rhimes perform'd by me,
 As *Hudibras*, immortal Story!
 From *Butler's* short Lines took his Glory.
 If so,—their Merit—I'll disclose, 255
 And trace their Rise from humble Prose.
 * An Author, who hath lately wrote,
 Whom I for an Impostor note,
 Would make his Readers all believe
Free-thinking came from Grandame Eve; 260
 Tho' by his Reas'ning likelier far
 To've sprung from her Tutor *Lucifer* :
 For I discern with half an Eye
 What he'd insinuate thereby ;
 And that a Friend to *Priesthood* spoke, 265
 Tho' cover'd with *Free-thinking* Cloak.
 † C—ll—s, whose Mem'ry claims Respect,
 The Scribe and Patron of our Sect,
 Avers, in his so fam'd Discourse,
 That our Opinions had their Source 270
 From Men of Morals, Wit, and Merit,
 Who some have spoke by Holy Spirit,
 And others famous in their Season
 As Supreme Oracles of Reason ;

* History of Priestcraft, a late Pamphlet.

† Discourse on Free-thinking, printed 1713.

And,

or, *The Free-Thinker's* ILIAD. 13

And, for a Proof of what he says, 275

Names † *Solomon* and *Socrates*.

But this our Enemies deny,

And cite their Words to justify;

Affirming, that with equal Truth

The Conjurer deluding Youth, 280

* Quotes *Judges* for Astrology,

† And *Job* to vouch—for Palmistry;

Because in Text where he refers

There's mention made—of Hands and Stars.

§ Such Notions therefore passing by, 285

Let us endeavour to descry

Free-thinking, and its Rise pursue,

Naming a Spring—at least that's new.

** 'Tis said, ye know,—that from the East

The Sciences have travel'd West; 290

And therefore I as boldly say,

Free-thinking came the self same Way;

In *India* I suppose it bred

In some ingenious *Brackman's* Head,

†† For Maggots,—as from Stories clear, 295

Breed there in Brains, as well as here:

So that 'tis probable 'at least

Our Sect was founded in the East.

* Discourse of Free-thinking (printed 1713.) P. 150. and 123.

† *Judges* 5. ‡ *Job*.

§ As the Power of Priestcraft is predominant thro' the Orient, 'tis likely Reflection on the Tyranny and Absurdity which attend it might occasion Free-thinkers there.

** Vid. Sir William Temple's Essays, Rapin's Comparison, &c.

†† Witness the Impostor *Mahomet* and his Successors.

And,

How-

Howe'er this be,—we'll shew for certain,
 § *Egypt* our Scheme had quickly part in ; 300
 And that thro' it in Antient Time
Free-thinking ne'er was thought a Crime,
 Since thro' each Village, Town, and Region,
 Each chose a several Religion ;
 Worship'd with Hymns and sacred Ballads, 305
 Or Stocks, or Monsters, Apes, or Sallads ;
 Held also diff'rent Thoughts in Physics,
 Express'd by various Hyroglyphics :
 And in a word, you'd hardly find
 A Thing where two were of a Mind. 310
 And thus we've prov'd to Demonstration,
 Beyond the Power of a Negation,
Free-thinking was their Constitution,
 From its best Evidence—Confusion.
 To *Greece*—from *Ægypt* next it came, 315
 But when—is not agreed by Fame ;
 * For some there are,—who of *Ocellus-*
Lucanus an old Author—tell us,
 Who, if we credit their Supposes,
 Cotemporary was with *Moses*, 320
 And wrote a Book, which they aver
 We should to *Genesis* prefer,
 Because the Stories therein told
 Are much more wonderful and bold.

§ *Juvenal* ridicules them on the same Topic, especially for their adoring Leeks ; as they did also Monkeys and Crocodiles.

* *Vid.* the Oracles of Reason. He wrote on the Eternity of the World.

But

or, The *Free-Thinker's* ILIAD. 15

But learned Critics quickly saw 325

§ That in his Title lay a Flaw,
And growing thence in Stile more curious,
They soon discern'd the whole was spurious.
Yet some Respect those Writings draw
Held still in our *Apocrypha*. 330

† *Democritus* of merry Mood,
Who laugh'd alike at Ill and Good,
And thought that Motes at random whirl'd
Compos'd the Fabric of the World,
Claims in our List the next Degree, 335

As Foe to all Divinity;
And who, deposing Providence,
Bestow'd her vacant Throne—on Chance,
Who ever since, in our Opinion,
O'er Worldly Things hath held dominion: 340

* And 'tis from this free-thinking Sage
Our Doctors have from Age to Age
Borrow'd whatever might assist 'em
In framing Atheistic System.

From him 'twas *Epicurus* thus 345
Stole what made after such a Fufs:
Such Deities—as he allow'd,
Plac'd none knows where—behind a Cloud,
Which neither Sound nor Light could pass
That might disturb their Happiness; 350

§ *Vid.* Dr. *Nichols's* Conference with a Theist, Vol. i.

† *Vid.* *Democritus* in *Bayle's* Dictionary.

* All the Learned acknowledge *Epicurus* borrow'd from him his Atomic System.

Where

Where they enjoy'd — what he thought *best*,

† A *lazy* and *inactive* Rest;

§ As Dormice in the Winter — Quiet,

Or Bear — on's self-devouring Diet.

Doctrines! — which gain'd him lasting Fame, 355

And stamp'd *Free-thinking* with his Name.

Tho' as I've sung — in Days of yore,

Democritus taught this before:

Nor is his Case, d'ye see, alone,

For when some great Discovery's shewn, 360

'Tis not the Man who found it out

Is fam'd, — but he who makes the Rout.

Columbus, thro' the unknown Main,

First gain'd the *Indies* unto *Spain*;

And yet *Vesputius*, who came after, 365

* Confer'd a Name — on his Fourth Quarter:

For you observe — Men never say

Columba, — but *America*.

Now to return to *Epicurus*,

Concerning whom 'tis odd you're curious, 370

I hold it fit to let ye know

His Life and Morals, — when and how

He rais'd himself to Head of Sect,

Which since has claim'd so great Respect,

And by its Precepts could engage 375

The *Beaux Esprits* of ev'ry Age,

† *Vid.* Diog. Laert.

§ Dormice are said to sleep, and Bears to suck their Paws, during the Winter Season.

* *Americus Vesputius*.

Ev'n

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Ev'n down to this,—commended now
 † By *C-ll-ns* and *Gassendus* too.
 Near *Athens*—dwelt our Philosoph,
 Admir'd,—altho' no canting Oaf; 380
 He taught—agreeable to Nature,
 That Pleasure should be most sought after:
 And tho' there's some who have objected,
 His Practise on his Sect reflected,
 Because, retir'd and studying hard, 385
 He liv'd,—and on the Coarcest far'd;
 Yet this is trifling,—since 'tis known
 He as his settled Rule laid down,
 * That Pleasure was the chieftest Good,
 And ought as such to be pursued. 390
 It follows then,—each must attain
 What best he likes,—or it's in vain.
 § To talk of Pleasure—None can guess
 What 'tis that will another please:
 He Salmon eats with Shrimps,—what then? 395
 May not I chuse my Butter plain?
 Shall I by him be taught to dine?
 Or must his *Goût*—submit to mine?
 Soon will the Cook thus solve the Doubt,
 Drefs his with Shrimps,—and mine without. 400
 'Tis so in Life,—our Pleasures all,
 Like Dishes at a grand Regal,

† In his Discourse of Free-thinking. *Gassendus* apologiz'd for him.

* *Vid.* Cicer. Diog. Laert.

§ 'Twas on this Reasoning the later Epicureans reconciled their Practice with the Precepts of their Master, who on all Hands is acknowledged to have lived abstemiously.

Stand full and fair, in Order plac'd,
 Where each may chuse — as suits his Taſt:
 Did Learning beſt with him agree? 405
 'Twas well, — but 'tis no Rule for me.

* He choſe Repoſe and Solitude,
 Becauſe, forſooth, — he thought them Good:
 So I, — when warm my Temper grows,
 Or ſeek the *Bedford* — or the *Roſe*; 410
 According as I feel a Flame,
 To indulge the Bottle, or the Dame;
 And Reaſon — or my Aim I miſs
 Proves my Concluſion — right as his.
 And here, — if Practice turn the Scale, 415
 My Argument — will ſure prevail,
 Since from the Ages primitive
 Down to the Age in which we live,
 † Freedom in Love — and eke in Drinking
 Have been the Baſis of Free-thinking, 420
 And gain'd us far more Proſelites
 Than all the Whims of Reaſoning Wights:
 Tho' theſe in Turn grew neceſſary,
 And help'd where t'other ſhould miſcarry.

For Men ye know are often frighted 425
 § From Things in which they moſt delighted

* This Philoſopher was not only fond of Retirement in himſelf, but made it a Point of Wiſdom to avoid public Employments. As moſt Poets draw the Heroes of their Pieces from their own Character, ſo many Philoſophers eſtabliſh their own Humours for the Rule of Reaſon.

† This Aſſertion one may challenge Friends or Enemies to deny.

§ For this Benefit confer'd on Mankind *Lucretius* celebrates him in the moſt pompous Strains of Numbers.

By

or, The *Free-Thinker's* ILIAD. 19

By Bugbear Tales — of knavish Priests,
Which *Epicurus* — turn'd to Jests,
And freed us — (was't not wondrous civil?)
At once — from Fear of G——d or D——l. 430

From whence methinks 'tis fit that we
* On some Criterion should agree,
Which may as well Free-thinkers note
As Quakers are — by Querpo Coat :
Something in us peculiar too, 435

As Circumcision in a Jew ;
A Sign — which may our Sect explain,
Yet not precise — or full of Pain
As theirs, — but somewhat *degagé*,
As a Free-thinker's Faith should be. 440

Say then, that this Characteristic,
Which should as Badge upon our Sect stick,
Be flat denying all Mistakes
Of Gilded Skies — or Brimstone Lakes,
† Where Men ('tis said) who've lost their Breath
Are doom'd to live in after Death :

And so this Abjuration be
A Gulf betwixt the Priests and we,
Which neither Party can wade over, 450
But strait on Shore they join the other,
As Oath of the same Name doth sever
The *Whigs* and *Jacobites* for ever.

* The Reason of this Criterion follows.

† In the celebrated Discourse of Free-thinking, page 153. there is a very extraordinary Note on this Subject, on which I am not ashamed to say I have had my Eye in this Passage as well as on the 3d Book of *Lucretius*.

But some perhaps will here reply,
 Will this not give ourselves the Lie?
 For do we not profess—that we 455
 In all we think about—are free
 To chuse what Sentiments we find
 Square best with our unerring Mind,
 Which true or false—must still ye know
 * Be true to those—who think them so: 460
 For Truth like Beauty—doth appear
 To th' Fancy only of the Seer;
 In which as two ne'er yet agreed,
 How can we form Free-thinking Creed!
 † But fair and softly—in your Road, 465
 The Case is not so wondrous odd,
 As I from Instances could prove,
 But that—you Demonstration love.
 Why you shall have it,—mark me then:
 'Till you grant this,—I say 'tis plain 470
 You can't Think Freely—in the Sense
 To which our Sect makes her Pretence:
 For this Concession still will bind
 The Soul—and captivate the Mind,
 By certain Consequences—draw 475
 § On Fears of Priests,—Religious Awe,

* This is the Basis of what the Moderns call *Free-thinking*.

† It were indeed impossible to think of the Deity, the Creation, &c. as the Authors do of the *Oracles of Reason*, the *Discourse on Free-thinking*, &c. if they had not conquered these Superstitious Fears.

§ This *Lucretius* well knew, and therefore bends his utmost Force against the Immortality of the Soul.

The

The very Follies—we intend
 Our Principles in Folks should mend.
 And thus from Argument you see
 How rational the Thing would be: 480
 * Or should ye urge,—as some have done,
 Asserting such a Right alone
 Enough us to distinguish by;
 Since they (we say) that Right deny
 Pursue this Thread,—’twill quickly shew 485
 That herein you’re mistaken too:
 For say,—we should agree to own
 With you—that plain Criterion,
 Would it not follow then, that they
 Who Christians are from thinking free, 490
 Free-thinkers were like us,—would you
 Acknowledge this Position true?
 Shall they,—whom we still ridicule
 As Compounds of the Knave and Fool,
 From this Concession—claim to be 495
 At least as much i’the Right as We?
 No sure! — we should make Men confess,
 None freely think,—but think like us.
 The Point from hence is Absolute,
 And we may now without dispute 500
 Declare,—that each shall henceforth make
 This Abjuration,—e’er he take

* This general Position of Free-thinking, tho’ sometimes it be laid down by our Authors, yet we do not admit as Free-thinkers those who pretend to hold Freedom necessary in Thinking, unless it carries them to throwing off the Load of Superstition. *Vid.* List of Free-thinkers, at the End of *C-H-n’s* Discourse.

On him — the great Free-thinking Name,
Or to our Glories puts in Claim.

* Now backwards once more let us seek 505

The Labours of our Patriarch *Greek*,
Who regulating Atoms Motions,
First into Method brought our Notions ;
Tho' freely of him we must own
There was some Difference in the Tone 510
Of his Opinions, and the Way
He pass'd his Life ; — for most Folks say,
In those — while he declar'd for Sense,
In this — he still chose Abstinence.
But Things at first — ne'er reach Perfection, 515
† His Sect — complied with each Affection,
Chose to lye soft, — in Plenty dine,
And grew as plump — as fatted Swine ;
§ As *Horace* to his Friend aver'd,
Who was himself — o' the same Herd, 520
‡ Led by this *Grecian* Torch so bright,
Who burnt — but to give others Light ;
¶¶ For such Improvements he had made
In the rough Philosophic Trade,

* Such Digressions may seem inexcusable to the meanest Critics,
who are unacquainted with *Pindar* and *Hudibras*.

† But that some Degree of Partiality may be allowed a Free-
thinking Author speaking of *Epicurus*, it should have been owned
that his Doctrines also were very inconsistent, he having written
sometimes in favour of the greatest Purity, and at others with all
the Wantonness of a Debauché.

§ ——— *Epicuri de grege Porcum.* Lib. 1. Ep. 4.

‡ A Metaphor from *Lucretius*, Book 2.

¶¶ So all his Followers boast, That he solved all the Phænomena
in Nature, without having recourse to the Power of Divinity.

That

or, The *Free-Thinker's* ILIAD. 23

That all the Difficulties past 525

It grew so wondrous smooth at last,

Wisdom with Pleasure did agree,

And Chance produced Harmony;

Mankind releas'd from childish Fears,

With their Religion — shook off Cares. 530

Yet all these Benefits were lost,

* Ungrateful Men his Mem'ry tost;

The Garden was o'ergrown, and few

Great *Epicurus'* Doctrines knew,

† Until the *Roman* MEMMIUS 535

Rebuilt, — and made a greater Fuss.

For him, — that all the World might know 'em,

§ *Lucretius* furbish'd up a Poem

Trick'd out with utmost Pomp of Verse,

The *Grecian* Maxims to rehearse, 540

‡ And once again — to set Men free

From Terrors — of a Deity.

With what Success this Author wrote,

It needless were — for me to note,

Since in our Tongue — his Labours teach 545

(Translated by the Hand of *Creech*)

§§ Our Pupils — Priestcraft to defy

With tuneful Infidelity;

* The *Epicurean* Philosophy drooped notwithstanding the Provision made by *Epicurus* in his Will to support it.

† *Memmius* reedified the Garden, and intended to have erected a stately Pile, in which *Epicurism* should have been taught.

§ It is to *Memmius*, *Lucretius* addresses his Work in a most pathetic Stile.

‡ This is the Purpose our Author himself declares for which he wrote his Poem.

§§ No Book has done more Service in converting Youth to Free-thinking than this.

Tho'

24 The Fall of *Priestcraft* :

Tho' had he still remain'd — in *Latin*,
Not one in ten — had e'er got at him. 550

Yet since this same Poetic Libel
Is now become Free-thinking Bible,
It will not be beneath our Lays
Something to say in Author's Praise.

Lucretius was a high-flown Wit, 555

But somewhat too too proud of it ;
Fond o' the Ladies, — yet* to one
Not quite so kind — as 'should have been,
Who strait to skilful Midwife flew

T'enquire what Philtre's Force could do ; 560

Provocatives to Love she bought,
But when her Swain had sup'd the Draught,
It seiz'd on the wrong Part — the Head,
And in plain *English* — made him mad :

Howe'er — in lucid Interval 565

His Mind with Poetry would swell,
'Till Frenzy caught the Bard again,
As from his famous Work — is plain.

† His Patron *Memmius* overcome
By *Cæsar's* Pow'r, — and banish'd *Rome*, 570

Unable to sustain the Ill,
His Grief so wrought upon his Will,
§ That Death — from his own Hands he try'd,
And like a true Free-thinker — Dy'd.

* Mr. Creech in his Notes and his Life of *Lucretius*, tells his Story as I do.

† This is the Cause generally assigned for his Suicide.

§ Free-thinkers often chuse the same generous Way of avoiding the Ills of Life, as in the Course of the Poem will be shewn.

With

or, The *Free-Thinker's* ILIAD. 25

With Lustre flourish'd our Sect, 575
While Courtiers from Black Care protect
* Their Bosoms, — by believing all
Lucretius taught them, would befall
When in the Grave, — That Death controuls
Alike — our Bodies and our Souls : 580
That thence — from ev'ry Pain we're free,
Because from thence — we shall not be ;
While what compos'd our former Frame
Rejoins the Mass from whence it came,
'Till it some other Form sustain, 585
Which never can be — Ours again.

As in old Plate, — let's put the Case,
'Tis melted to a liquid Mass ;
With Care the Artist this refines,
And then in some new Shape it shines : 590
Before an Antique Bowl, — 'tis now
A Gay Monteth of splendid Show ;
Altho' from the same Stuff they came,
Are the Monteth, and Bowl — the same.

These Arguments, — when once receiv'd, 595
And as unshaken Truths — believ'd,
Calm all our Cares, — and leave of course
No Leak that can let in Remorse.
† Such Maxims easily seem right
To Persons courtly and polite, 600
Who t'amuse their Lives, still try
The Joys of sweet Variety.

* This is the Sum of *Lucretius's* System in this Respect.

† 'Tis certain that the Opinions of Free-thinkers are found
most among the Men of Pleasure.

26 The Fall of Priestcraft :

Rove careless on from Charm to Charm,
As Boys whip Tops, to keep 'em warm ;
'Till Death cries — *Come !* — unwilling they, 605
Like Children call'd to School from Play,
Reluctant go, — back Glances cast,
And toy, and loyter, to the last.

So Authors say —, (if not erroneous)
* It far'd with that old Beau *Petronius*, 610
Cried up for a Free-thinking Hero,
The Bosom Favourite of *Nero*,
Director in his am'rous Measures,
And sole Dictator to his Pleasures.

For *en passant* — you may remark, 615
'Twas somewhat odd o' this same Spark,
That he two famous Tutors had,
One taught him Good, — and t'other bad ;
Each alike famous in his Way,
Petronius this, — that *Seneca*. 620

His Reign hence chequer'd Good and Evil,
† Five Years a Saint, — the rest a Devil :
'Till growing downright Brute at last,
§ *Petronius* scorn'd so base a Taste :

* *T. Petronius Arbiter*, Favourite and Confident of *Nero*.

† His first five Years were so happy to the Public, and so glorious to himself, that one of the best of his Successors acknowledged both for his own Part, and also for those good Emperors that had gone before him, That in the mildest and most gentle Part of their Administration, they had yet fallen short of the *Quinquennium Neronis*.

§ The Elegancy of *Petronius* in his Voluptuousness, made him condemn the Brutal Pleasures into which *Nero* fell; and the Repentment of this Contempt, exaggerated by some who envied *Petronius*, caused his Death.

Pro-

or, The *Free-Thinker's* I L I A D. 27

Provok'd at which, — stern *Nero* sent 625

A sort of awkward Compliment
To tell, 'twas his Imperial Will,
That he e'er Night himself should kill.

Petronius knew nought could prevail,
And since no Fence against a Flail, 630

Resolv'd (as thinking it too late
By a new Course to mend his Fate)
To die — as he had liv'd — d'ye see,
Unmindful of Futurity.

In lukewarm Bath his Veins now run, 635

* And Death by slow Degrees comes on ;

Musick now sweetly wounds the Air
With Sounds contriv'd to soften Care,
While he — doth softest Lays rehearse,
And strives to sooth his Soul with Verse ; 640

Fain would amuse his latest Breath,
And die, — without a Thought of Death.

For this his Memory's renown'd,
As a Free-thinking Martyr crown'd :

† With *Seneca's* his Death's compar'd, 645
And ev'n to *Seneca's* prefer'd.

§ So *Roche-focault* asserts the Page,
Who danc'd a Minuet on the Stage
With Air alert, and nimble Heel,
Then danc'd his last — upon the Wheel, 650

* *Audiebatque referentes, nihil de immortalitate animæ & Sapien-
tium placitis, sed levia Carmina & faciles versus.*

Tacit. lib. 16. Ann.

† By St. Evremont.

§ See that famous Duke's Maxims.

To Fame held just as fair Pretence
As the Great *Cato Uticense*.

* Here let us with the Antients finish,
Tho' with great Names I could replenish
My Verse, and more Free-thinkers shew 655
Amongst both *Greeks* and *Romans* too :

But those at present we reject,
Lest we the Moderns should neglect ;
According to the Courtly Fashion
† By *Charles* brought in at Restoration, 660
Who left old Friends to starve, 'tis true,
But then it was — to feed the New.

* Besides those who have been falsely called Free-thinkers, many of the Antients, such as the Sceptics (Followers of *Pirrho*), were really so.

† This is the celebrated Maxim instilled on such Occasions ;
Gain your Enemies, Friends will be Friends still.





C A N T O III.

*The Ancients having thus run thro',
Next 'mongst the Moderns we'll pursue
Free-Thinking's Progres, — celebrate
Her low and her exalted State,
Rais'd by late Chiefs we HEROES find all,
As T-land, G-rd-n, Coll-s, T-nd-l ;
Names which shall shine with endless Glory !
When Parsons are forgot in Story.*

AS Homer,* — that immortal Bard !
His Readers for their Deeds prepar'd,
By drawing first their Characters, 665
Who in his Poems makes such Stirs ;
Then shew'd their *in* and *outward* Force,
The Troops they brought of Foot and Horse ;
Their Country, Courage, Arms ; in fine,
The Ships with which they grac'd the Line ; 670
And how they all this Strength employ
To batter down detested *Troy* ;

* This as a Part of the Ceremonial in the *Iliad*, has been
(especially the List of Ships) servilely copied by most of the Imitators in Epic.

30 The Fall of Priestcraft :

† As Butler — Homer in Burlesque
 § Describes — in Language *picturesque*,
 His Errant Knight and trusty 'Squire 675
 So warm with their Phanatic Fire ;
 They squabble still, and yet we see
 They who in no Point else agree
 Were yet unanimous in One
 To pull the CHURCH Establish'd down : 680
 So I, — who of Free-thinkers write,
 Shall celebrate their various Might,
 Sing how in several Brigades
 Their Force — Religion's Cause invades ;
 And while they seem to differ quite, 685
 In the same grand Design unite ;
 Play from each distant Battery
 Their small and great Artillery,
 * And spend their Stock of Ammunition
 Against what they call *Superstition*. 690
 First then the Forlorn-Hope appears
 Of our Free-thinking Curassiers,
 Each Soldier in himself a Chief,
 All over arm'd with *Unbelief*,
 Impenetrable Brass they bear 695
 Unpierc'd by Argument in War ;

† Butler observ'd this very justly ; for when the Sectaries had ruined the Church, having now no longer an Enemy to unite them, they ruined one another.

§ *Picturesque* is a metaphorical Word used by Mr. Pope in his Notes on *Homer*.

* Thinking variously (provided it be not superstitiously) is the certain Consequence of Free-thinking.

For

The *Free-Thinker's* ILIAD.

31

For tho' they've oft in Combat been
Attack'd with Sword of Reason keen,
Th' Antagonist they still keep off
With sneering Smile, or open laugh! 700
For well they Mortals may defy,
Who fear not — ev'n the Deity.

Yet something here I fain would shroud,
But Truth commands to speak aloud ;
Well then I'll do't, — for each of these 705
Dress'd in their Garb, — one Twenty sees
A sort of Pseudo-Heroes, who
O'er Cups and Flaggons make ado,
But like true Carpet-Knights still flinch,
When Danger doth their Valour pinch, 710
If Sickness seise, if Thunder rolls,
It wakes a Tempest in their Souls ;
Hell flashes strait before their Eyes,
Those Flames they would so fain disguise,
And they with abject Fear adore 715
That Being they disown'd before.
Or if more stubborn they maintain
A War within, — 'tis but in vain ;
For *Conscience*, when she's once in Arms,
Raises such terrible Alarms, 720
Fears strait the Understanding bind,
Distract the Sense, distort the Mind,
Until the Wretch, who cannot tear
From his sad Breast the racking Care,
Mad thro' his Agony, — now runs 725
To Water ! Halters ! Daggers ! Guns !

Hasty

Hasty the fatal Stroke to give,
And die ! — because he dares not live.

Some Instances should this explain,
But I confess I write with Pain 730
Of this nice Point, on which our Foes
In spite of all we say, expose
Our Weakness ; — not to dwell upon't,
I'll name but † * * * *, § ~~Cress~~^{Crash}, and ~~Blunt~~^{Blunt}.

'Tis time we now our Eyes turn round 735
Towards those who've firmly kept their Ground,
Maugre the Priesthood's furious Will,
To chase and persecute them still,
Who've with just Obstinacy stood,
And seal'd their want of Faith — with Blood. 740

* As he in *Poland*, — whom they cram'd
In Cannon — first with Powder ram'd,
For the denying of a Being
He would not own — without the seeing,
Fir'd him towards *Tartars* wild abodes, 745
As Boys are wont — to blow up Toads.
Such was his Fate ! — and many more
Have suffer'd deep on the same Score ;
Of whom my Verse should sing their Dirge,
Sad Victims to the Wrath of Clergy, 750

† One who when he dispatch'd himself, left the *Persian* Letters open, and doubled down at this, *The Laws in Europe are furious against Suicide, &c.*

§ Two famous Free-thinking Translators from *Latin* and *Greek*.

* He asserted, It was impossible to form any Idea of a Being unperceivable by our Senses.

Whom

Whom *Dryden* with Prophetic Flame
 Affirms of all Sorts — are the same :
 And so they should be from their Work,
 Since *Dervises* turn'd ev'n the *Turk*
 Against Free-thinkers, — and *Effendi* 755
 * A Martyr was — as sure as can be,
 With all — for this pretended Crime
 Who've suffer'd thro' each Age and Clime,
 And died. — My nodding Muse, forgive
 She should have said, who ever live ; 760
 Since *G-l-d-n*, and since *C-ll-ns* strive
 To keep their Glories still alive,
 Like Holly Green thro' ev'ry Season,
 † Fam'd as — *The Oracles of Reason*.
 Yet I methinks do still regret 765
 Their Prudence did not save their Fate ;
 Why like each Puritannic Sect
 (Free-thinkers Enthusiastick)
 Did they not fly to 'scape the Fury
 Of bloody Priest, or bigot Jury : 770
 Like them — in spite of Seas and Shelves,
 Seek Country's wild as they themselves,
 And bless the Winds that brought 'em there,
 Transported safe — from Common-Prayer ;
 Might they not make as good an End on't 775
 As *Quaker*, — or as *Independent* ?

* We have a very uncertain Account of the Death of this *Effendi*, or his Principles, however he is cannoniz'd by the Free-thinkers, and plac'd in their Calendar next the Martyr *Vanini*.

† The Title of a famous Book published by *G-l-d-n*.

34 The Fall of Priestcraft :

Could they not grub up woody Region
With the same ease they did Religion,
'Then in their room, — (what most they lack)
Plant *Atheism* and *Tobac* ? 780

Thus settled, — and become a Nation,
How had it rais'd our Reputation !
For of no People do I read,
* Who're quite from Superstition freed,
Or who have our Opinions got, 785
Unless it be — the *Hottentot*.

But now at Home we live in Peace,
Dispute, convert, and so increase :
From Pedants Works our Notions flourish,
While Quack Donations those encourage, 790
And swell our Sect with Medicafters,
Beaus, Courtiers, Players, Poetafters,
Buffoons who live and die in Jest,
With here and there — a Popish Priest.
† Next these — a numerous Band take post 795
The Flow'r of our Free-thinking Host,
Who tho' they plainly don't deny
The Being of a Deity,
Yet limit, censure, and define,
Which answers still the same Design, 800

* A celebrated Writer, who has had more than one Legacy left him, by those who in their last Moments piously intended to shew their Zeal for Free-thinking.

† The Deists acknowledge a Divinity, but turn all their Reasonings on his Beneficence and Love to his Creatures, or his entire Forgetfulness of them, and leaving them and their Concerns to Chance.

Makes

or, *The Free-Thinker's* ILIAD. 35

Makes Men less apprehensive here
By ridding them of future Fear,
Which checks their vicious Inclinations,
And puts Restraints upon their Passions :
All which — from Sentiments like these, 805
Retire, and lessen by degrees ;
Nor give weak Minds so harsh a Trial
As from an absolute Denial.

† So when in Year of Forty One,
The Parliament their Stir begun, 810
Tho' refractory all the while,
They left not off their Courtly Stile ;
Still was the King saluted by
Great Sir ! and Sacred Majesty !
Meer Forms of Speech, — for surely they 815
Meant nothing less — than to obey ;
Gilding black Deeds with outward Beauty,
Much Reverence, — and little Duty !

* But then this outward Shew of Awe
Is only vulgar Eyes to draw ; 820
For when with highest Eloquence
The Deist hath pronounc'd his Sense,
And in the most exalted Stile
Rais'd up his Theologic Pile,

† See *Clarendon*, &c. on this Point.

* On removing the Superstitions of Revealed Religion, it was necessary to form some general Heads of Belief, which might take up the Minds of Converts, and not leave them so unsettled as to endanger their being perverted to the Christian Scheme. This therefore put the Deists upon forming Creeds in their own Way, which for Intricacy may vie with that commonly called St. *Athanasius's*.

To's Pupils he the Art explains, 825
 And that he Nature only means,
 Whose Pow'r (quoth he) on all below
 Doth Beauty, Strength, and Worth bestow.
 But what is Nature? — Nay for that
 He ne'er attempts to tell you what; 830
 For he a Circle here asserts,
 That's close united in its Parts;
 Nature gives Forms to Things, and then
 They break, and are new form'd again:
 Thus in eternal Round roll on, 835
 Still changing, and yet never done.
 Alike in Language pertinaceous
 * Spoke *Averroes* and *Pomponatius*,
 With all their Followers of the Tribe,
 Who thus to Nature all ascribe; 840
 Yet in their own Way are outdone by
 Our *Blunt* — in his *Anima Mundi*;
 Who hints from the Antients having stole,
 Form'd thus a System of the whole:
 † Since Nature's Power absurd we find, 845
 Place then (quoth he) a boundless Mind,
 Which animates at once the ALL,
 And every individual;
 As Water, — tho't divided be
 In Rivers, yet makes up the Sea. 850
 To this vast Mind let us add more,
 Wisdom compleat, — Almighty Pow'r,

* These were two famous Men, who took the Body of their Opinions from *Aristotle*.

† The System is in the *Oracles of Reason*.

or, The *Free-Thinker's* ILIAD.

37

And so this Mighty Mind shall be
 A Democratic Deity ;
 A Light emitting living Beams, 855
 An Ocean which from Being streams :
 And hence 'tis clearly understood,
 * That all which we behold is G-d,
 From Sun and Moon, to Flea and Louse,
 And henceforth equal — Man and Mouse. 860
 † But Great *Vanini* ! injur'd Name !
 Pardon — that I forgot thy Fame !
 Thou from this Good old Cause no Starter,
 At once Apostle wer't and Martyr ;
 With Zeal this Mission undertook, 865
 And for the Good of Mankind spoke,
 Laugh'd at their Tales, and into Jest
 Religion turn'd : — Thy self a Priest,
 § Like *Julian* in the Days of Yore,
 Who had a Deacon been before, 870
 ‡ With what egregious Art didst thou
 Attempt the Christian Overthrow !
 Veiling thy Strokes with the Pretence
 Of writing in their Faith's Defence,
 And thereby safely found a Way 875
 Thy Atheism for to convey,

* See *Nichols's* Conference with a Theist, Vol. I.

† *Vanini* and his Companions set out with an Intent to convert the World, for which he was burnt at *Tholouse*.

§ See *Collier's* Dictionary.

‡ His famous *Amphitheatrum*, in which under colour of Defending the Christian Religion, he took occasion to state Objections in their fullest Light, then ridicule the usual Answers, and substitute weak and trivial ones in their stead.

Ob-

Objections with full Force to speak,
And leave the Answers loose and weak ;

Copy'd for this in later Seasons

* By *C-ll-ns* in his *Grounds and Reasons*, 880

So call'd by sharpest Irony,
Since all he meant to do thereby
Was to *descry* in form of *Praise*,
And *level* what he seem'd to raise.

But Thou did'st better far succeed, 885
Shrouded in Sacerdotal Weed ;

It gave thee Pow'r—conceal'd so long
To tempt the Old, and win the Young.

Nay, when they did thy Thoughts detect,
Those Thoughts did on themselves reflect : 890

For whene'er Priests apostatize,
It makes the weaker Sort despise

† The Doctrines which before they taught,
So tractable's the vulgar Thought !

Thus didst thou wound with thy last Breath, 895
And *Samson*-like—destroy'd in Death.

Yet not with Death thy Suff'rings end,
Thy Boldness which did all transcend

Who went before, 's o'ercome at last,

And thou by *Woolston* art surpass'd, 900

Who only wants thy Martyrdom
To rise our Patron—in thy Room.

* This famous Book is written in the same manner, and with the same View as *Vanini's Amphitheatrum*.

† Nothing is more common than for the Pastor to mislead his Sheep.

or, *The Free-Thinker's* ILIAD. 39

Methinks I hear thy howling Ghost
Lament thy Reputation lost,
And thus with tortur'd Fury cry 905

* What did the Villain more than I?
Than thee! — why ev'ry Way he try'd
To purchase Bread on t'other Side;
But finding that the Loaves he mist,
Deserted and despis'd his Ch--st, 910

Deny'd, traduc'd each wondrous Feat
Compar'd to Mountebank and Cheat,
And pierc'd with Rancour far more keen
Than either Jew or Heathen Spleen,
Had dar'd — while Infidel's dismay'd 915
Start at the Inroad that he made,
By Fiends themselves before untrod,
Thus to blaspheme and mock his G-d.

Encourag'd by the Noise he made,
The Under Brothers o' the Trade, 920
Whose Morals or whose Parts oft are
Too mean to purchase them a Share
Of Church Preferments, often now
Desert to us: — Not long ago,
A bawling witless Renegade, 925

To shew himself no more afraid
Of his Superiors, — from the Pulpit
Vented the Malice of his Dulpate
Against the Clergy of the Nation,
And preach'd it at the Visitation: 930
Vain of this most Heroic Act,
He hopes from us — a vast Respect.

* Alluding to the Vehemence of *Vanini's* Temper.

And

And if this Proof be yet too weak,
 His Goodwill to our Cause to speak,
 He offers something else to do, 935
 Burlesque a Miracle or so;

And on's Performance we have seen
 † The Fig-Tree blasted once again.

But we despise so mean a Tool,
 While of such Wits our Sect is full, 940

* As *Tind-*, who each Parliament
 Does to the Members Eyes present,
 Whenever to attend a Call
 § They pass to Chapel thro' the Hall,
 A Treatise finely Gilt and Bound, 945
 But in its Doctrines so unsound,
 It exercises Parson's Pen

'Till Sessions comes about again,
 Then's half refuted left in haste
 To mark the Errors of the last. 950

Next *Tind-l*, *G-rd-* must have place,
 Who writes with such a studied Grace,
 Each Work of his at least's an odd Piece,
 Stuff'd up and swell'd like *Harry's C-dp-cc*;
 Wrote in so stiff, precise a Stile, 955
 That none can read without a Smile;
 Not that the Matter, but the Author
 Excites while we peruse to Laughter;

† The Defence, &c.

* Alluding to a second Part of *Christianity as Old*, &c. speedily to be published.

§ Through *Westminster-Hall* to *St. Stephen's Chapel*.

or, The *Free-Thinker's* ILIAD. 41

Who like Preceptor when at School
 With haughty Air lays down his Rule, 970
 Dictates with an assuming Nod,
 As if he threaten'd with his Rod ;
 And that his Readers when compar'd
 With him — were Blockheads to be scar'd :
 Nor can Distinction curb his Choler, 975
 A PRINCE with him — is but a Scholar.
 But *C—ns*, who is now deceas'd,
 Was he who us supported best ;
 * His *Essay*, *Grounds*, and *Lit'ral Scheme*
 With us perpetuate his Name ; 980
 And ev'n the Superstitious own
 His Publick, Private, Virtues shone
 With Splendour,— that his Morals were
 Just, unaffected, fair, and clear :
 And thus,—by force of Party led, 985
 They mourn he wrote, — We that he's dead,
 But I had need of *Homer's* Muse,
 If for my Subject I should chuse
 To celebrate each sprightly Wit,
 Who has Religion's Blind-side hit ; 990
 Some like the *Str—t's* are hir'd to scribe,
 And live by carping at the *Bible* ;
 While *P—t* with steady Resolution
 The Gospel and the Constitution
 Each *Saturday* by turns exposes, 995
 Wrap'd up in double Penny Doses :

* *Essay on Free-thinking ; Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion ; and Literal Scheme of Prophecy.*

G

Others

42 The Fall of *Priestcraft*, &c.

Others, who're born to better Fates,
Support the Cause with their Estates;
And if by chance the Law lays hold
On One whose Zeal has been too bold, 1000
Ready at hand our Council are,
Proud of Blaspheming at the Bar.

Such our Success!—Triumphant we
The Clergy's toothless Malice see;
Declining still, we quickly hope, 1005
Reform'd from Them as from the Pope,
Free-thinking (since so much the Fashion)
Shall be the Religion of the Nation;
When, rid of Parsons, — what they get
May go — *To Pay the Public Debt.* 1010

F I N I S.





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*Clear as Mirror, if the Ocean's Scene,
 Its Bosom shining with a pleasant Green;
 Yet who'll deceiv'd by this Appearance be
 In a small Bark to trust the faithless Sea,
 Where sudden Gusts its Billows may deform,
 And swift Destruction reach him from a Storm?
 Yet such are all the Blandishments of Vice,
 And to as sad a purpose they entice,
 Warn'd by these Sheets, the Paths of Pleasure shun,
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